

# ***Iowa Outdoors***

## **Iowa Department of Natural Resources**

### **www.iowadnr.com**

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**Oct. 7, 2003**

1. Bow Season Begins – by Joe Wilkinson
2. Natural Resource Commission to Meet Oct. 9 in Decorah

## **BOW SEASON BEGINS**

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Flip the calendar and, suddenly, it's October. For some, it means closing the door on summer, settling back and bracing for winter. For most outdoor enthusiasts, though, October offers a wide array of opportunities; the southward push of shorebirds and waterfowl, the fall feeding binge as fishing heats up before winter, the opening of hunting seasons, or just enjoying the *change* of seasons.

For bow hunters, October opens 'their' season. "This time of the year is just absolutely gorgeous," concedes Bob Dolan, Department of Natural Resources northeast district wildlife supervisor. Shirtsleeve-summer days will yield to heavy frost and the buildup of mating activity. Shorter days and cooler temperatures will eventually turn regal, reclusive bucks turn into animal lunatics by month's end.

And this year, wildlife officials hope that easy access to *antlerless* tags will encourage more early bow season doe hunting. Hunters can sharpen their aim, put venison in the freezer and still have time to pattern and pursue that trophy buck as the peak of the rut approaches. "You can pursue that big buck. At the same time, you can use antlerless tags to fill the freezer and go back and spend more time in the woods," offers Dolan. "This is a tremendous opportunity for some one who likes to hunt deer; almost unlimited opportunity."

In these early days of the season, deer remain in their late summer feeding pattern. "This time of year, deer like to feed in alfalfa fields, or where they can find other legumes," explains Dolan. "I'd be looking for travel lanes between those fields and bedding areas. Those patterns have been established through the summer and will continue into fall. As the crops come out, expect the patterns to change."

Pre-season scouting plays a big role in your success, be it a doe for the freezer or antlers for the wall. As usual, I couldn't get up to Delaware County until late September. I'm hoping the daylong drizzle muffled my movements in the timber and washed away my scent after leaving. Since the area serves extra duty with winter shotgun season and spring turkey season, I'm pretty familiar with it. Still, the September tour showed that while two stands were just about right, the third one looks better when moved closer to a heavily used trail leading away from a hillside heavy with fresh tracks and droppings. That trail wasn't more than a narrow path a couple years ago.

A trip down the gravel road showed where the hayfields and the cornfields were this year. Last year, a stand that had yielded a deer each Thanksgiving weekend the past two seasons was disappointing. The adjacent field had been pasture. Now, it is back in corn and should be an attractive, late November food source. "Once you get a killing frost, the legumes won't be quite as attractive to deer," says Dolan. "They will start shifting more to the corn. You also begin to see the start of the rut. Buck activity will start to change. Look for rubs, scrapes and set up between them and the bedding areas, down off the trails a little ways. You'll see a change in the pattern as fall progresses."

Over the last couple years, I've watched deer-including a few nice bucks--disappear into a hillside tangle 100 yards south of my 'main' stand. I've also sent deer crashing out of there through the pre-dawn darkness, as I walked in a few minutes late. Detouring through it this year, I could see why. I had to stoop and nearly crawl to avoid overhanging limbs and brush, just high enough for a whitetail to negotiate. A fresh, white rub seemed only hours old. Coming out of the tangle, I looked up at my 'backup' stand, 20 yards away. I had been in plain view on that side of the oak. With a quick adjustment, I'll now be shielded and watching from the other side. I'll also approach the stand from other direction, if the wind is favorable. This year, the spot has potential.

Whether you see a deer or not, there are worse places to be than in the woods, or the edge of a field in October in Iowa. The changing colors alone are worth the trip. Add to it the increased wildlife activity and you have the widest of 'wide screen' entertainment. Squirrels crisscross the woods, with acorns and hickory nuts that carpet the timber. Sit quietly and a coyote or turkey will trot suspiciously through.

I watched a flock of 10 wood ducks quickly wing down to the pond. Another 12 or 14 were moments behind. I was sure there were more already there. As I left, I couldn't resist. I stood up; triggering a flapping, whistling exodus as more than 40 woodies scattered in every direction but *toward* me.

It's going to be a good fall.

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## **NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION TO MEET OCT. 9 IN DECORAH**

DECORAH - The Natural Resource Commission (NRC) of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will meet at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, Oct. 9, at the Hotel Winneshiek, in Decorah. The meeting is open to the public.

Commissioners and DNR staff will meet at 1 p.m., Oct. 8, at the Heartland Inn Motel in Decorah, for a tour of the area.

Members of the NRC are Joan Schneider, Randy Duncan, Paul Christiansen, Carol Kramer, William Sullivan, Richard Francisco and Janice Marcantonio. The DNR Director is Jeffrey Vonk.

The following is the agenda for the October meeting.

- Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes of Sept. 11
- Construction Projects
- Land Acquisition
  - Pine Lake State Park, Hardin County – Quaker Heights Camp
  - Buffalo Creek Wildlife Management Area, Delaware County – Henderson
  - Lake Darling State Park, Washington County – Pepper
- Waubonsie State Park, Fremont County – Land Exchange (Tabled) – Attorney General's Advice
- Marengo Gateway Park, Iowa County – 28E Agreement
- Clay County Fair Cabin Facility – 28E Agreement
- Conservation and Recreation Donations
- Final Rule – Chapter 106, Deer Hunting by Residents
- Final Rule – Chapter 94, Nonresident Deer Hunting
- Honey Creek, Appanoose County Road Closure Joint Resolution
- Termination of 28E Agreement – Chariton Valley RC&D
- REAP City Parks and Open Space Grants
- REAP County Conservation Board Grants
- REAP Public/Private Cost-Sharing Program
- Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 33, REAP Program: County, City and Private Spaces Grant Programs
- State Fair Display Video
- General Discussion
- Items for Next Meeting – Nov. 13, Des Moines

**For more information, contact Karyn Stone at 515-281-8650.**

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